

Commonly Asked Questions About Two Pine Rocklands Plants Endangered Species Protection

Q: What action is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service taking?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is announcing “endangered species” status for two South Florida plants, the Florida brickell-bush and Carter’s small-flowered flax--under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Q: Why is this action necessary?

The Service determined that these plants warrant this status due to declines in both plants resulting from: habitat loss and modification through urban and agricultural development, inadequate fire management, proliferation of non-native, invasive plants. Another potential threat to both plants is sea level rise.

Q: Can you describe pine rockland habitat and tell me why it’s important?

Pine rockland is a savanna-like forest on limestone outcrops with a single canopy species, South Florida slash pine, and a diverse understory of shrubs and herbs.

Pine rocklands provide critical foraging and nesting habitat for a diverse array of wildlife. While significant areas of pine rocklands are now protected within preserves such as Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, and the National Key Deer Refuge, pine rockland fragments are still threatened on the Miami Rock Ridge and in the Florida Keys.

Federally listed plants and animals that depend upon or utilize pine rocklands in South Florida include the Deltoid spurge (plant), Eastern indigo snake, Florida bonneted bat, and Florida panther.

Q: What about critical habitat designations for these two plants?

The final decision for critical habitat designations on these plants is pending, but should be made this fall.